

occupations etc. may be explained as a children's word widely attested in Russian.

A. Lyavdansky

**H. Murre-van den Berg's** article "Classical Syriac, Neo-Aramaic, and Arabic in the Church of the East and the Chaldean Church between 1500 and 1800" (pp. 335–351) is an important contribution to the history of the Syriac literature and the culture of Christian Aramaeans in the modern era. Apart from the "Introduction" and the "Concluding Remarks," her essay is divided in two parts: "The Use of Classical Syriac, Neo-Aramaic, and Arabic" and "The Function of the Languages." In the first part of the article, the author provides a general survey of the texts produced in this period in all the three languages. She observes that "during the 16th to 18th centuries, the Classical Syriac heritage was renewed and expanded in several ways" (p. 337), and that the hymns of the *ʿunīlā*-type continued to be composed and retained their popularity, while Neo-Aramaic texts "compared with the wealth of Classical Syriac materials from the 17th and 18th centuries ... occupy only a very modest position" (p. 339). Among the latter, the author singles out the *durekyātā*—popular, usually religious, hymns. She remarks that "[f]rom the 18th century onwards, the authors of the *durekyātā* come mainly from Chaldean circles" (ibid.). One could also add that these hymns have remained almost completely unknown in some non-Uniate tribes of the modern Assyrians. The other genre of texts produced in Neo-Aramaic is that of "drinking and love songs (*zmīryātē d-rāwē*)" (p. 340). Concerning the material in Arabic, the author argues that though "Arabic once again (after its intensive use in the Middle Ages.—N. S.) became a vehicle of expression in [both] the Church of the East and the Chaldean circles," "the majority of Arabic texts, however, originated in the Chaldean circles" (p. 340). This observation is developed in the second part of the article, which describes the functions of the languages. There the author highlights that Arabic was mainly used in the "modernized" urban society while being unpopular in "rural" settlements of the faithful of the Church of the East, and "this tendency was reinforced by the fact that Arabic had become the language of the Catholic movement in the Middle East" (p. 345). Another important fact—that texts in East-Syrian *garšūnī* are exclusively of Chaldean provenance—confirms the author's observation and leads us to believe that traditional Assyrians regarded Arabic as a vehicle of Catholic *propaganda*. Concerning the role of Classical Syriac at that time, Murre-van

den Berg writes that “when [she first] started to study this period, [she] tended to see Neo-Aramaic as the important innovation, and Classical Syriac as a literary language in decline, struggling in the face of new competitors such as Neo-Aramaic and Arabic,” but further research convinced her that “whatever one might think of the literary qualities of Classical Syriac poetry of this period ..., the language is without any doubt the preferred literary language of the two communities ensuing from the Church of the East” (p. 342). This statement, developed further in the article, is crucially important for students of Syriac literature. It corrects William Wright’s misleading, yet unfortunately influential conclusion, made at the end of his *Short History of Syriac Literature*: “After ʿAbhd-īshōʿ (d. 1318) there are hardly any names among the Nestorians worthy of a place in the literary history of the Syrian nation.”<sup>19</sup> At the end of this review, I would suggest two minor critical remarks. In the “Introduction” the author lists the following languages used by modern Arameans in addition to those discussed in the article: “Persian, Dutch, Swedish, English, French or German” (p. 335). It is unfortunate that Georgian, Armenian, and Russian are ignored. Several lines below, she mentions “missions” that operated in Persia in the 19th and the early 20th century, and once again, only “American Presbyterian, British Anglican, and French Roman Catholic” missions are listed, while the Russian Orthodox and the German Evangelical Lutheran missions go unmentioned. These minor omissions, however, do not in any way detract from the value of Murre-van den Berg’s very useful and timely study.

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<sup>19</sup> Wright 1894:290.

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Российский  
государственный гуманитарный  
университет

● **Orientalia**

et **Classica**

**Труды Института восточных культур  
и античности**

Выпуск XLIII

## **Вавилон и Библия 6**

Древнеближневосточные, библейские  
и семитологические  
исследования

● **Orientalia**  
**etClassica**

Papers of the Institute of Oriental and Classical Studies  
Volume XLIII

## **Babel und Bibel 6**

Annual of Ancient Near Eastern,  
Old Testament, and Semitic Studies

*Edited by*

L. KOGAN, N. KOSLOVA, S. LOESOV, AND S. TISHCHENKO

Published for  
the Russian State University for the Humanities  
by  
EISENBRAUNS  
Winona Lake, Indiana  
2011

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